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## SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION GROUP MEMBERS

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44720**1. Speak your mind freely.**

The discussion meeting is yours—a chance for you to say what you think. Say it. Your ideas count. Here “everyone’s idea is worth just as much as everyone else’s, and a good bit more than some.”

**2. Listen thoughtfully to others.**

Try hard to get the other man’s point of view—see what experience and thinking it rests on. Remember: On almost every question there are three points of view—yours, mine, and the right one.

**3. Keep your seat when you speak.**

Whether you are group member or leader, don’t stand up to speak. The discussion meeting is not a place for speeches. Informality is the rule here.

**4. Don’t monopolize the discussion.**

Don’t speak for more than a minute or so at a time. Give others a chance. Dig for things that *matter*. Make your point in a few words, then pass the ball to someone across the circle. If discussion lags, help the leader put questions that will draw others out.

**5. Don’t let the discussion get away from you.**

If you don’t understand where it’s going, say so. Ask for examples, cases, illustrations until you *do* understand. Try to tie up what is being said with your own experience and with what you have heard and read.

**6. Indulge in friendly disagreement.**

When you find that you’re on the other side of the fence from the discussion, say so and tell why. But disagree in a *friendly* way. There’s one truth that everyone’s after. Good-humored discussion leads part way there.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ADMINISTRATION

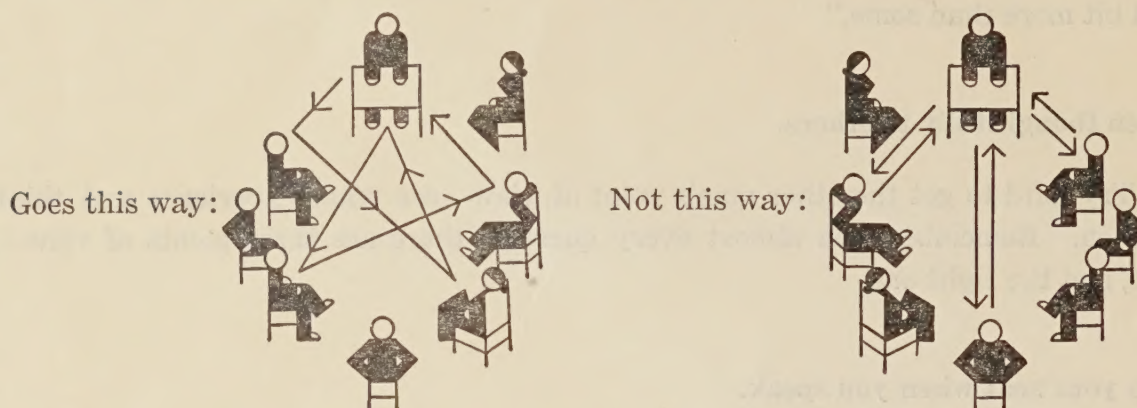
PROGRAM STUDY AND DISCUSSION SECTION

WASHINGTON, D. C.



## 7. Strike while the idea is hot.

Don't wait for the leader to recognize you before speaking. If several want to speak at once, it's his job to grant the floor to one, give the others a chance later. Your ideal discussion—



## 8. Come to the discussion with questions in mind.

Make note of questions and points of disagreement that occur to you during advance reading or listening, and raise them during the discussion. Farm papers, the daily press, lectures, public forums, the radio, etc., are good sources for clippings and notes to be used at discussion meetings.

## 9. Go ahead from discussion to study.

Remember that discussion is just the first step—an important one, but still just a starter. If your thinking is stirred up by the discussion here, seek out materials for further study on the problems. Ask your County Agricultural Agent, Home Demonstration Worker, or State Discussion Leader about reference materials. Call on them, too, for help in organizing a county-wide discussion movement, training leaders, etc.

## 10. Why not group discussion at home?

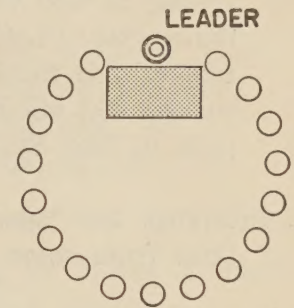
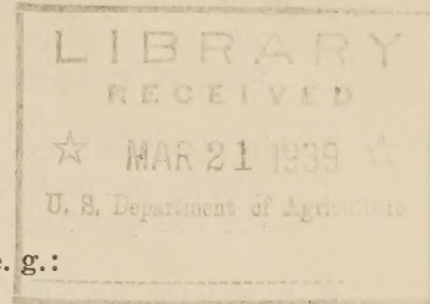
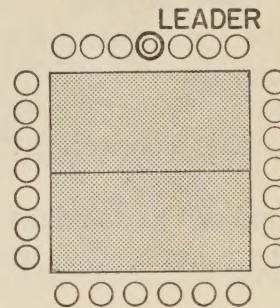
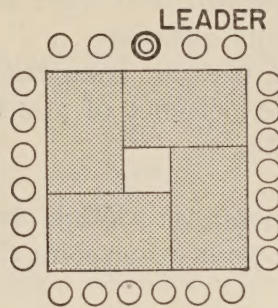
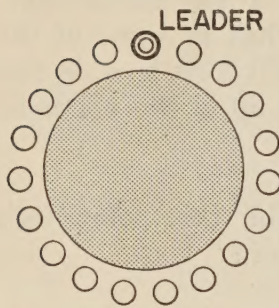
All over the country farm men and women are gathering, often in farm homes, for discussion of public problems under local leaders. Some are using the best discussion and forum programs of the air as springboards for continuing discussion. Why not a neighborhood discussion group in your home?



# SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION LEADERS

## GETTING READY

1. Arrange group in circle, so each person can see every other person.
2. Provide table space, if convenient, for leader and entire group, as e. g.:



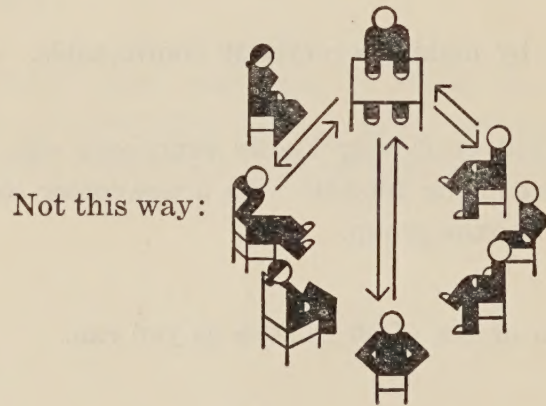
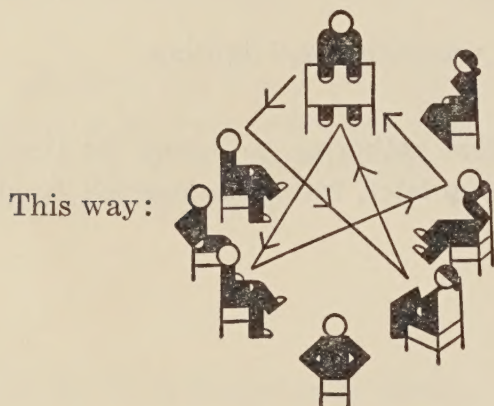
3. Let all stay seated during discussion, including leader. Keep it informal.
4. Start by making everybody comfortable. Check ventilation and lighting.
5. See that everybody knows everybody else. At first gathering go 'round the circle, each introducing himself. As a newcomer joins group later, introduce yourself to him and him to the group.
6. Learn names of all as soon as you can.
7. Have blackboard, chalk, and eraser ready for use in case of need. Appoint a "blackboard secretary" if the subject-matter and occasion make it desirable.
8. Start on time, and close at prearranged time.
9. In opening, emphasize: *Everyone* is to take part. If one single member's view fails to get out in the open, insofar the discussion falls short.
10. Toward this, emphasize: *No speeches*, by leader or group member. No monopoly. After opening statement, limit individual contributions to a minute or so.

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## CARRYING ON

1. Make your own preparation for the discussion. Think the question through in advance. Aim to establish connections between ideas of background materials, and experience and ideas of group-members.
2. Aim at outset to get a sharply defined question before the group. Have three or four alternatives put on board if you think this will help: "Which do you want to start with?" "Is this question clear?"
3. In general, don't put questions to particular group-members, unless you see that an idea is trying to find words there anyway: "Mrs. Brown, you were about to say something." Otherwise: "Let's have some discussion of this question . . ." "What do some of the rest of you think about this?" "We've been hearing from the men. Now how do you women feel about this?" "What's been the experience of you folks up in the northern part of the State in this connection?" Etc.
4. Interrupt the "speech maker" as tactfully as possible: "While we're on this point, let's hear from some of the others. Can we save your other point till later?"
5. Keep discussion on the track; keep it always directed, but let the group lay its own track to a large extent. Don't groove it narrowly yourself. Try to have it



6. Remember: The leader's opinion doesn't count in the discussion. Keep your own view out of it. Your job is to get the ideas of others out for an airing.
7. If you see that some important angle is being neglected, point it out: "Bill Jones was telling me last week that he thinks . . . . . What do you think of that?"
8. Keep the spirits high. Encourage ease, informality, good humor. Let everybody have a good time. Foster *friendly* disagreement. Listen with respect and appreciation to all ideas, but stress what is important, and turn discussion away from what is not.
9. Take time every 10 minutes or so to draw the loose ends together: "Let's see where we've been going." Be as fair and accurate in summary as possible. Close discussion with summary—your own or the secretary's.
10. Call attention to unanswered questions for future study or for reference back to speakers. Nourish a desire in group members for continuing study and discussion through skillful closing summary.



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United States Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Adjustment Administration  
Program Study and Discussion Section  
in cooperation with Agricultural and Rural Life Agencies

SCHOOLS FOR AGRICULTURAL LEADERS

What is a Desirable National Agricultural Program?

In October, 1935, the first in a new tradition of Schools for Agricultural Leaders was held in Washington, - for 75 members of the federal Extension Service staff. In the following 40 months, 40 similar Schools were held in 30 different States, - principally for Extension Workers.

During 1938, interest in the content and method of these Schools spread and led to requests for cooperation in conducting similar Schools for Farm Security Administration Workers, Vocational Agriculture Teachers, Soil Conservation Committeemen, County Planning Committeemen, etc.

The following statement is prepared to answer the principal questions that are asked concerning the Schools, - their purpose, their content, and their method.

What Are the Schools?

They are conferences or "institutes" of agricultural and rural life workers, generally four days in length, planned for open discussion and concentrated study, with a selected staff of lecturers; and they are built around the question, "What is a desirable national agricultural program?" in its broadest implications.

How Organized and Attended?

The Schools are organized by the Program Study and Discussion Section on invitation of and in cooperation with the Directors of agricultural and rural life agencies. For the most part, Schools have been conducted on a State-wide basis, in each case for workers in some one agency. There has been a growing interest, however, in organizing similar Schools on a small district basis, bringing together farmer leaders and field workers from all rural life agencies in twenty-county districts. An opposite tendency has led to joint regional Schools which have brought together outstanding leaders from the principal agricultural agencies in several-State regions, such as the Northern and Southern Great Plains.

Attendance has run as high as 475 at single Schools, has averaged 135 at first Schools in particular States. At second and third Schools, attendance has averaged 230, field workers being joined in conference with leading farm men and women. Total attendance before April 1, 1939 was 6000.



The expense of bringing together the staff of lecturers is borne by the Program Study and Discussion Section, that of gathering the workers and farmer leaders by the State agency or agencies concerned.

#### What is the Idea of the Schools?

(1) To give agricultural leaders a chance to stand off from their jobs and "take stock," renew perspective.

(2) To better their understanding of present agricultural programs and policies.

(3) To stimulate independent thinking on the social and economic problems that underlie agriculture's predicament.

(4) To help prepare leaders for county agricultural planning activity.

#### How are they Staffed?

Each School is staffed by six or seven leaders in Philosophy, Economics, Government, History, Sociology, Education, Psychology, etc., from the colleges, universities and research institutions of the country, and from various government agencies. These leaders are selected on the basis of consultations between the Chief of the Program Study and Discussion Section and the Director, Supervisor, or Administrator of the agency concerned.

In general each staff-member speaks twice on topics assigned him at the time of invitation, and with complete freedom to develop his point of view as he sees fit. The principal basis for staff-selection is reputation for outstanding work in the fields concerned. Plans are so laid that each staff includes distinguished representatives of widely different view-points, critical of as well as sympathetic to present national policy. Where possible the staff is composed largely of leaders in near-at-hand States, for the most direct attack on problems of the region.

#### What is the Program?

The morning hours are devoted to lectures by School staff-members; two hours each afternoon, to discussion in small round-table groups of 20 to 25 persons each. Usually the second afternoon is devoted to an informal panel discussion of some crucial question, leading into a free-for-all open forum, the panel being made up of the School staff-members and an equal number of local leaders.



The typical program presents lectures on the first day on "Backgrounds," on the second day on "The Place of Government in Modern Society," on the third on "Regionalism, Nationalism and Internationalism," and on the fourth on "Problems of Social Adjustment and Administration."

In the afternoon discussion sessions, attention is focussed on the materials of the morning lectures as they bear on local problems. These meetings are of, by and for the students. They are led by selected members of the conference body, a new leader for each new hour of discussion. The lecturers attend the group meetings but are invited to participate only on a basis of complete equality with the students.

#### How do the Discussion Leaders Prepare?

When possible, a one-day training conference is held under the leadership of the Regional Discussion Specialist of the Department to assist the chosen leaders in preparing for their responsibilities at the School. Then at a final short conference of the leaders just before the School, last minute questions are considered. It is sometimes feasible to distribute in advance to group members as well as to leaders mimeographed sets of brief statements framed by School staff-members as summary anticipations of the course which lectures are to follow. In addition, sets of reference suggestions for follow-up study may be distributed.

#### Where do the Schools Lead?

There is an increasing tendency to work from these Schools to a continuing educational program aimed at stimulating rural people to a more active study and discussion of underlying social and economic problems and assisting them in every way possible with their study. This tendency has sprung from a recognition of the universal need, expressed or unexpressed, for such study, and from a sense of the responsibility of the professionally trained leaders in agriculture to serve this need. The reactions of students at the Schools, as surveyed by State leaders, indicate that the Schools contribute valuably to the founding and furtherance of such programs.

The services of five Regional Discussion Specialists of the Section are available for discussion leader training conferences and for other meetings through which these ends might be advanced. In addition the Section has prepared a considerable pamphlet literature on these underlying problems to supplement what is already available through State offices.

#### What do Participants Get Out of the Schools?

The reports of county farm and home agents, of specialists and farmer leaders attending the Schools, of Directors of Organizations active in their conduct, and of School staff-members, witness the effectiveness of this general approach.







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U. S. Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Adjustment Administration  
Division of Program Planning  
in cooperation with Extension Service

Typical Program - Schools for Extension Workers

What is a Desirable National Agricultural Program?

First Day. Backgrounds.

1. What Can Philosophy Contribute to a Better Understanding of the Present Situation?
2. General Social and Economic Background of the Present Situation.
3. Immediate Backgrounds of Present Agricultural Policies and Programs.

Second Day. The Place of Government in Modern Society.

1. Individualism, Democracy and Social Control.
2. The Relation of Government to Social and Economic Affairs.
3. The Problem of Continuing a Program of Agricultural Adjustment.

Third Day. Regionalism, Nationalism and Internationalism.

1. Unity and Diversity in Society.
2. Political and Economic Considerations.
3. A Desirable Foreign Trade Policy for American Agriculture.

Fourth Day. Problems of Social Adjustment and Administration.

1. Psychological Problems in Social Adjustment.
2. Democracy and Group Leadership, or Traditional Economics and our Present Economy.
3. Sanctions.





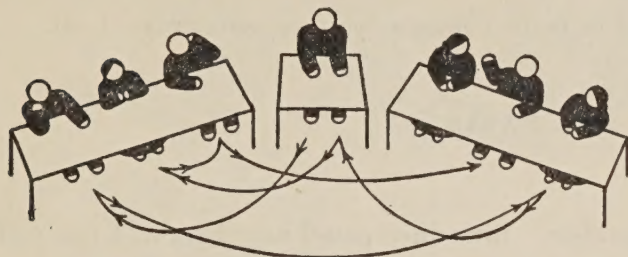




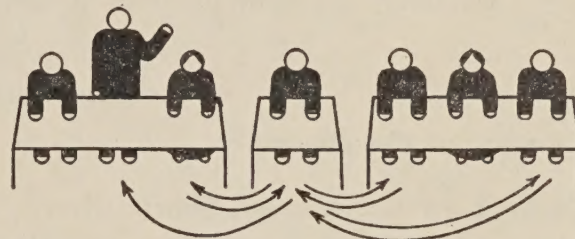
## SUGGESTIONS FOR PANEL DISCUSSIONS

### WHAT IS A PANEL DISCUSSION?

1. **Its Meaning:** A panel discussion is a discussion among a selected group of persons under a leader and in front of an audience which joins in later. The form is conversational—no speeches by members or by leader.



THIS WAY



NOT THIS WAY

2. **Its Place:** Panel discussion is a good plan when the crowd is too big for all to take part. For smaller groups, there is no substitute for round table discussion; but with groups larger than 40 or 50, panels have definite advantages.
3. **Its Composition:** Good panels may number from 4 to 10 persons; 6 or 8, in addition to the leader, is ideal—large enough for variety, small enough for genuine conversation.
4. **Its Purpose:** To get important facts and different viewpoints out into the open, stimulate audience thinking, and lay a basis for wide participation later.

### PREPARING FOR THE PANEL

#### *The Program Committee's Preparatory Job*

1. **Select a Timely and Significant Topic.** State it clearly, and, generally, in question form.
2. **Select Members With Care**—people with different backgrounds, willing to reexamine their convictions, ready to give and take. A good voice and a clear and concise manner of speaking help.
3. **Select Leader and Members Early.** Give them a chance for study and thought beforehand.
4. **Allow Enough Time.** Panels should never be rushed. Those shorter than an hour seldom succeed. But conclude while audience interest is still high.



## ***The Panel Leader's Preparatory Job***

1. **Meet in Advance With Panel Members**—to get acquainted and to reach a common understanding on topic and method.
2. **Discover Major Points To Be Discussed.** In preliminary conference, frame an over-all pattern, a few principal questions to be raised. But discourage lengthy advance discussion. Agree about the beginning—one member to open the discussion and perhaps a second to carry on. From then on let it be free, spontaneous, unrehearsed.
3. **Look to the Seating Plan.** “Set the stage” with an arc of chairs and tables on a slightly raised platform close to audience. Do not seat members with similar viewpoints together; mix them up. Seat lively talkers on the ends, quieter ones near the center so you can encourage them.

## **CONDUCTING THE PANEL**

### ***As Leader of the Panel***

1. **Make Your Introduction Short.** Brevity is golden. Introduce panel members in a few words. Speak of general plan for panel and audience participation. Then say just enough to spotlight the problem, and throw out your first question; 5 or 10 minutes is enough for this. After introduction, remain seated throughout.
2. **Keep Your Own View Out of It.** Enter the discussion only to (1) ask clarifying questions, (2) interpret uncertain meanings, (3) bring discussion back to the track, (4) summarize, (5) ask “next step” questions, (6) interrupt speech makers. Be the strictly impartial “moderator.”
3. **Address Questions to the Panel as a Whole or to a Part of It.** Don't question individual members, as a rule. Let participation be as free and spontaneous as possible.
4. **Ask Challenging Questions**—not the “Yes” and “No” kind, but “Why?” and “How?”
5. **Dig Out Points of Difference**—not as in debate, but in friendly united pursuit of the truth. Work toward understanding, reconciliation. Strive to find the “common meeting ground.”
6. **Take Time for Occasional Summaries**, especially at the end. People like to know that progress has been made. Point out “loose-end” questions.
7. **Invite Audience Participation** somewhere around the half-way mark—statements of experience and opinion as well as questions. As leader, do not answer questions; refer them to panel or others in audience.

### ***As Member of the Panel***

1. **Be Alive to Your Opportunities.** A discussion is a cooperative venture. Always watch for the right moment to speak your own viewpoint—vigorously, clearly, concisely. Help the leader keep the discussion balanced, lively, forward moving.
2. **Remain Seated Throughout Discussion**, but remember your audience. “Speak to the back row.”
3. **Set an Example of Careful Reflective Thinking.** Listen thoughtfully to others. Strive to get their viewpoints and what lies back of them. Try your own ideas in the court of public review, and join in a common quest of truth.